

A Civil War Dilemma

It is January 1862 and the Civil War has come to the C&O Canal. The Union and Confederate armies are fighting for control of the C&O Canal because it is used to transport supplies to the Union (North) soldiers. Runaway slaves are occasionally seen escaping along the C&O Canal towpath on the Underground Railroad. Confederate General Jackson has made it very clear that any runaway slave will be caught and returned to slavery. He will also punish anyone who helps runaway slaves. Some runaways get help from boat captains who pretend the runaways are members of their crew.

Usually the canal is closed in the winter, but in 1862, the canawlers use ice-breaking canal boats to keep the canal open so they can get supplies to the Union Army in Georgetown.

You are Captain Coss from Williamsport and you own your canal boat, *The Caroline of Williamsport*. You carry cargo up and down the C&O Canal between Cumberland and Georgetown. Your first mate is a free Black man named Pic who has worked on your boat for over three (3) years with his teenage son Little Pic.

Your boat is just west of Hancock, 32 miles from home in Williamsport. Your mules and mule driver can cover 16 miles in 6 hours. If you push on for the next 32 miles (12 hours) it will be hard but you, Pic, and Little Pic will be home in Williamsport.

You just heard that Confederate General Jackson will soon attack the canal at Hancock. It will be dark soon. Generally, you would park the boat along the canal at night because it is cold in the wintertime. If you stay where you are, you may be far enough west of Hancock to be safe from attack. However, you have no idea how long Jackson's army will be in the area and you could be stuck near Hancock for a long time. However, if Jackson's forces move quickly, and cross the river your boat could be stopped and searched. Pic and Little Pic might be taken into slavery, and you as the boat captain, could be punished.

Civil War Dilemma Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions to determine the best option. There are four options.

Option 1: Continue forward to Williamsport

- ✓ List at least 2 pros (good things) about moving forward to Williamsport.

- ✓ List at least 2 cons (bad things) about moving forward to Williamsport.

Option 2: Turn around and go back to Cumberland

- ✓ List at least 2 pros (good things) about turning around.

- ✓ List at least 2 cons (bad things) about turning around.

Option 3: Abandon your boat

- ✓ List at least 2 pros (good things) about abandoning your boat.

- ✓ List at least 2 cons (bad things) about you abandoning your boat.

Option 4: Stay where you are

- ✓ List at least 2 pros (good things) about staying.

- ✓ List at least 2 cons (bad things) about staying.

What choice are you going to make?

Why do you believe this is the best choice?

What are the possible consequences of your choice?